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***Top Healthcare Providers, Insurers, Patient Advocates
Address Key Issues to Reform Nation's Health Care System***

(St. Louis, MO) - Today Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-3), joined by Congressman Wm. Lacy Clay (MO-2) and Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson (MO-8), heard from area health care experts to discuss health care reform, which Carnahan and President Obama have called for this year.

"The American health care system is broken; that we all know," said Congressman Carnahan. **"Forty-six million Americans, one and a half million living right here in Missouri are uninsured. Most of these people work, and are left without preventative care options, costing taxpayers much more when they get sick and head to area emergency rooms."**

Most of the panel discussion surrounded the need to eradicate the shortfall of coverage to both insured and uninsured Americans. Making health care accessible is an issue of particular importance to rural areas where people have become increasingly underserved with or without coverage.

In addressing the expansion of health care coverage, insurance industry attendees suggested public private alternatives. Congresswoman Emerson and Carnahan have worked together on the SHOP Act in the past to help small businesses pool coverage making the cost of insuring more workers affordable.

The SHOP Act would cut administrative costs for small businesses, which spend almost 25 percent of their health insurance premiums on administrative costs, compared to 10 percent for large employers.

"Reforming health care will strengthen our middle class, help businesses create jobs and be competitive, rebuild the economy and put our Nation on a sound financial footing far into the future," said Carnahan.

Panelists also discussed HMO's and the need to getting medications into the hands of millions in need of treatment.

Comments from health underwriters in the audience took issue with panelist comments that

America's health care system is broken, while primary care physicians took issue with insurance industry claims that wholesale government reforms were not needed.

Earlier this year Congress passed the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which included investments in safe and cost-saving electronic health record technology, assistance to families to maintain their health coverage through COBRA, as well as funds to help Missouri prevent cuts to Medicaid . Congress also successfully passed legislation preserving health care for 81,764 low-income and uninsured Missouri children.

"Action to achieve comprehensive health care reform must happen, not next year, not in 4 years, but this year," said Carnahan.

Additional forums are being planned throughout the area, as Congressman Carnahan works on legislation that can help guarantee overall health care improvements and the ability for more individuals to gain access and treatment.

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